

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, June 8, 1895, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. Externat de l'Assomption. 10 rue Nitot, Paris, France. June 8, (1895) My darling Alec:

I wish I could see you and Mr. McCurdy and Mr. Mc Innis, Duncan and John Mc Aulay and all the other men on the place. I wish I could be in our great hall before the big fireplace. I wish I could be walking along the upper level road to the laboratory with you or rowing around the point with Mr. McCurdy. I wish I could be scolding Mr. Martin about his latest mistake. I wish I could see how my own peonies are getting on and my incantate clover and my own especial alfalfa plot. In short I want to be home again at Beinn Bhreagh, loveliest and dearest of hills. Paris is but a poor exchange for it. Why isn't the summer six months long so that I can stay out the four months of our stay in France and yet have two months of Beinn Bhreagh summer. I saw a cart drive past laden with my dear crimson clover and my heart ached for that grown on our own soil. Tell me how is it getting on and is my new alfalfa plot sown with alfalfa seed as I desired and how does the plot sown last year and not fertilized look? According to the prospectus it ought to be very fine this summer in contradistinction to it's ragged appearance last year. Mr. McCurdy spoke of two new reservoirs above the red barn. Is Mr. McInnis irrigating the growing crops? I read somewhere that in the years to come irrigation will no longer be considered a substitute for rain, but rain will be considered a substitute for irrigation and a very poor one at that. With the means of irrigation at hand you can apply it when needed and 2 there are times in the life history of vegetation when a proper amount of water given then will do more for its growth than at any other time, while its absence then will do damage which can never be made good afterwards.

Library of Congress

I am disappointed that my club has stopped. The stoppage takes away my incentive to write and I thought I could beguile my time here by writing to the club. I haven't so very much time so far, however. My letters take up a good portion of that which the children leave and perhaps after all I am better occupied trying to make them what I would have them. It's no easy matter. Sometimes I think Elsie is becoming softened and more gentle and charitable in thought and manner and then she will break out with speech so hard and cruel that I am overwhelmed. However it is not very often.

This morning there being no lessons I took the children on an exploring expedition in search of the Salon of the Champs de Mars. In our vain search we brought up close to the Eiffel Tower so we went up it, quite an expensive business and one that I have no desire to repeat. There was little to see from the top, the atmosphere was so misty and that little was not impressive by reason of the great height leveling even the tallest buildings to a common level of insignificance with the meanest. Passers-by below looked like ants and it was hardly possible to separate cabs and their horses into their component parts. Yet it is an impressive thought to realize that this immense tower was built up bit by bit by those tiny creatures beneath us, unaided save by tools of their own making. Truly small as we are and helpless individually we are yet wonderful creatures, and worthy the immortality we claim for 3 ourselves.

From Mamma's last letter it seems as if she may after all come over this summer. If so I may yet be able to return to you instead of your coming to us. Still if you can come, perhaps for the children's sake it might be as well, for the more I think of it the more I think of the importance of your being with your children for a few weeks here when there is no laboratory to take your thoughts from your children, and you can give yourself to them as you gave yourself to me in Mexico. If we did that we might with a clear conscience give ourselves another winter in Beinn Bhreagh and oh I do want that.

Ever your own Mabel. (Enclosed was clipping re. Mrs. Peary's lecture)

MRS. PEARY'S LECTURE For Mr. M. Curd — My father says she made An Interesting Narrative of Life Within the Arctic Circle.

\$400. 00

The Icy Landscapes, the Qunint People and Their Customs, the Wonder and the Magic of Northland.

When Mrs. Peary closed her lecture last evening at Metzert's with the resolute face of Capt. Peary slowly fading from the huge screen as the electric lights were turned on, the large audience still sat, as if expecting her to continue—like Milton's Adam, "Still thought him speaking, still stood fixed to hear."

It was just such a story as the brave, true, sensible wife of an intrepid voyageur should tell of life in the arctics. Lectures of voyages before this have told us of all the scientific aspects of expeditions similar to Capt. Peary's, but Mrs. Peary spoke simply of the human experiences involved — the every-day manner and habit of living. Throughout the narrative was fascinatingly interesting. The illustrations were exceptionally good, having the unique value of original snap-shot work by Capt. and Mrs. Peary during all their sojourn at the north. The views of the icebergs and ice fields, the glaciers and the floes, afforded a constant background and environment for the romantic story of the little family exploring party. Mrs. Peary's account of her daily toil and recreation, the cooking of meals, the instruction of the Esquimau women in sewing, the long walks and sledge journeys, nights spent in the tent or in the ice huts of the natives during the wildest of storms, the hunting of walrus and seal, was more than fancy painted. The natives seemed to be forever interesting. Their diminutive stature, their peculiar dress of birdskins and seal leather, their habits of life, were faithfully described. The life of a baby Esquimau until large enough to walk is somewhat like that of a marsupial, living in a hood on the back of the mother, the child clad only in a birdskin shirt, and the mother's back bare for the sake of the warmth imparted.

Library of Congress

A peculiar custom of these northern people was told in the story of a young woman employed by the Pearys. Her husband was drowned while seal hunting, leaving the widow with three children. A young Esquimau began to court the widow. When Mrs. Peary spoke to her about it and asked after her children the widow went away crying. It was then learned that after the Esquimau custom the youngest child had been strangled, for no Esquimau would marry a widow with so many young children to support.

Strange Process of Tanning.

The Esquimau women, in their assistance at the sewing, revealed their queer hardship in the work of chewing deer skins to prepare them for clothing. So arduous is their toil in this way that they have to rest their jaws every third day. The average Esquimau woman can chew but two skins in a day, and this requires very steady labor. Especially interesting was Mrs. Peary's allusion to her pretty little girl, born in the arctic home, where, just like other babies, she grew and thrived, smiling in the sunshine, playing with flowers and the playthings provided her.

An Arctic Sun Bath.

It was a novel sight in one of the pictures on the screen to see the little baby laughing as it lay taking its sun bath outdoors, entirely nude, on a bear skin. This up within the arctic circle seemed impossible, but Mrs. Peary assured her audience that at the time the thermometer stood at 90, and her greatest anxiety was to keep the mosquitoes from biting the little girl. The lecture closed with pictures of the baby's juvenile companions, one after another, and of Mr. Hugh Lee of Meriden, Conn., Capt. Peary's comrade this year, and of Matt Henson of Philadelphia, the faithful colored man who is with them.

In July, as a result of Mrs. Peary's efforts, a ship is to sail northward over the route of the Kite, to afford the relief of which the party may be in need. If successful, in the autumn, Mrs. Peary said, the little family would be reunited.

Library of Congress

TO SERVE AS MARKET WOMEN.